

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 SAJ-01 SAB-01 SAM-01 SSM-03

ACDA-07 DHA-02 SCCT-01 /103 W

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R 091550Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2384

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 5586

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XF

SUBJ: SOVIET OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON MIDDLE EAST

REF: MOSCOW 5449

1. SUMMARY. DURING APRIL 8 CALL BY ACTING DCM, YE. PYRLIN,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOF THE MFA'S NEAR EAST DIVISION, IMPLIED
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THAT THE OBSERVER ARTICLE ON LEBANON (PRAVDA, APRIL 8)

WAS DIRECTED PRIMARILY AT THE U.S. AND WAS MOTIVATED AT LEAST IN PART BY AMBASSADOR BROWN'S MISSION. ACCORDING TO PYRLIN, MANY OF THE INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE LEBANESE CONFLICT SUPPORT SYRIAN MEDIATION, BUT HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT NO FINAL SOLUTION IS YET IN VIEW. PYRLIN ALSO ADMITTED THAT THE LEBANESE FIGHTING HAS RESULTED IN INCREASED SPLITS WITHIN THE PALESTINIAN RANKS, BUT HE STATED THAT NEW EFFORTS ARE EVOLVING TO COORDINATE AN OVERALL PALESTINIAN POSITION. PYRLIN WAS REASONABLY UPBEAT ON SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS, AND MENTIONED THAT TRADE AND DEBT RESCHEDULING TALKS COULD TAKE PLACE IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN SOVIET TECHNICIANS AND ADVISERS AND THEIR EGYPTIAN COUNTERPARTS WERE AS GOOD AS EVER. PYRLIN SAID THAT THE MEPC PER SE WAS FROZEN BUT HE SEEMED MILDLY INTERESTED IN WALDHEIM'S PROPOSAL FOR A UN CHAIRED CONFERENCE OF INTERESTED PARTIES. PYRLIN DENIED THAT MOSCOW WAS GIVING ANY THOUGHT TO TRANSFERRING THE ALEXANDRIA NAVAL OPERATIONS TO LIBYA, AND POINTED OUT IN THIS REGARD THAT THE NUMEROUS PROBLEMS WHICH LIBYA HAS WITH EGYPT AND TUNISIA. END SUMMARY.

2. LEBANON. ASKED ABOUT THE REASONS FOR ISSUING AN AUTHORITATIVE "OBSERVER" STATEMENT ON LEBANON AT THIS TIME, PYRLIN REPLIED THAT IT WAS DESIGNED "TO FIX ATTENTION ON THE GENERAL SITUATION" WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS "VERY DANGEROUS, VERY TENSE, AND VERY COMPLEX." PYRLIN WAS NONCOMMittal WHEN ASKED IF THE ARTICLE WAS AIMED ESSENTIALLY AT THE U.S., BUT WHEN FURTHER PRESSED HE NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR BROWN IS "A MASTER OF INTERNAL WAR," AND BASED THIS ASSERTION ON THE AMBASSADOR'S EXPERIENCE IN JORDAN IN 1970. PYRLIN ALSO MENTIONED IN THIS REGARD MOVEMENTS OF THE 6TH FLEET AND THE U.S. INTERVENTION IN 1958. WHEN ADCM ASSERTED THAT U.S. POLICY WAS TO MAINTAIN LEBANESE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND ASKED WHAT POSSIBLE MOTIVE WE COULD HAVE FOR STIRRING UP TROUBLE IN LEBANON AS IMPLIED IN OBSERVER ARTICLE, PYRLIN REPLIED THAT U.S. MIGHT BE MOTIVATED TO ASSIST LEBANESE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND THAT THIS HAD BEEN THE CASE IN PAST LEBANESE CRISES. ADCM RESTATED THAT U.S. POLICY WAS CLEARLY TO ACHIEVE A VIABLE SETTLEMENT, BUT PYRLIN INDICATED THAT HE WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT CONVINCED OF THIS.

3. AS FOR SETTLEMENT MODALITIES, PYRLIN SAID THERE WERE CONTINUING EFFORTS TO "INTERNATIONALIZE" OR TO "ARABIZE" THE CONFLICT. PYRLIN ADDED THAT MOSCOW IS IN CONTACT WITH SYRIAN LEADERS, BUT HE AFFIRMED THAT THERE IS STILL GREAT DISAGREEMENT AND THAT NO SIGN OF A FINAL SOLUTION HAS YET BEEN DETECTED. HE SAID THAT SYRIAN MEDIATION

MAY BE A "GOOD THING", BUT THAT IT WAS A VERY COMPLICATED MATTER. WHILE LEBANESE LEFTISTS SUPPORTED THIS EFFORT, OTHER LEBANESE ARE OPPOSED TO ANY INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE STRUGGLE. IN THIS REGARD, HE ADDED THAT THE IRAQIS SAY THEY ARE OPPOSED TO SYRIAN MEDIATION BECAUSE "THEY CONSIDER IT SYNONYMOUS WITH U.S. MEDIATION."

PYRLIN POINTED OUT THAT AMBASSADOR VINOGRADOV HAD RECENTLY BEEN IN THE REGION, AND HAD MET WITH ASAD, ARAFAT, AND OTHER LEADERS, BUT HAD RECEIVED "CONFLICTING REPORTS" FROM EACH CONCERNING THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND AND THE PROPER PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW AT THIS POINT.

4. ASKED ABOUT THE EFFECT THE LEBANESE CONFLICT HAS HAD ON PLO "UNITY," PYRLIN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT DIFFERENT FACTORS OF THE PLO SUPPORT DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS. HOWEVER, HE ADDED, AS THE RESULT OF AN INITIATIVE FROM THE ARAFAT SIDE, THERE IS MOVEMENT TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOME SORT OF ORGANIZATION WHICH COULD "COORDINATE" ALL PALESTINIAN EFFORTS IN AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE "A COMMON AND PURELY PALESTINIAN APPROACH." ACCORDING TO PYRLIN, SUCH AN ORGANIZATION WOULD INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE HABBASH, HAWATMAH, AND ARAFAT GROUPS. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NO FURTHER DETAILS BECAUSE THIS TENDENCY IS STILL IN ITS "INITIAL STAGES" OF DEVELOPMENT. IN THIS CONNECTION, PYRLIN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN AL-FATAH AND SA'INA WERE NOW "VERY TENSE."

5. EGYPT. PYRLIN HAD LITTLE TO OFFER ON SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS, BUT STATED THAT MOSCOW DEPLORES THE ABROGATION

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 5586

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

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ACT. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE SOVIETS CONSIDER THAT IT
WAS SADAT PERSONALLY WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS MOVE,
PYRLIN REPLIED THAT "SADAT AND THE GROUP AROUND HIM
BEAR THE BLAME FOR THE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS.
HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE
EGYPTIANS AND THE SOVIET TECHNICIANS WHO ARE ACTUALLY
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WORKING IN EGYPT WERE STILL "VERY GOOD." PYRLIN ADDED
THAT TRADE TALKS WOULD TAKE PLACE "SOON," AND THAT DEBT
RESCHEDULING DISCUSSIONS COULD BEGIN IN MAY. HE ALSO
PLAINTIVELY LAMENTED THE FACT THAT OTHER ARAB GOVERMENTS

HAD NOT YET MADE ANY OFFICIAL DECLARATIONS CONDEMNING
SADAT'S ACTION, EVEN THOUGH MANY ARABS WERE EXPRESSING
IN PRIVATE THEIR CRITICISMS OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT.

6. GENEVA CONFERENCE ASKED HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE
POSSIBILITIES OF A RECONVENED GENEVA MEPC, PYRLIN RE-
PLIED THAT FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE "EVERYTHING IS
FROZEN." IN THIS REGARD, HE SAID HE HAD JUST RECEIVED A
CABLE FROM ROME NOTING PRESIDENT SADAT'S SUPPORT FOR
RECONVENED CONFERENCE IN 1977 FOLLOWING THE US ELECTIONS
CONCERNING THE RECENT VISIT TO MOSCOW BY UN USYG GUYER,
PYRLIN WAS FRANKLY CRITICAL AND SAID THE UN OFFICIAL CAME
TO MOSCOW WITH A FEW IDEAS BUT "WITHOUT DETAILS." HE
ADDED THAT GUYER'S IDEAS HAD BEEN REJECTED BY THE PALES-

TINIANS AND SYRIANS IN ANY CASE. REFERRING TO WALDHEIM'S RECENT PROPOSAL FOR A CONFERENCE OF INTERESTED PARTIES UNDER UN AUSPICES, PYRLIN SAID THAT THE SOVIETS HAD ONLY RECEIVED THIS APRIL 5 AND WERE STILL UNCLEAR AS TO WHAT WALDHEIM HAS IN MIND. HOWEVER, HE ADDED THAT SUCH A MEETING MIGHT DIFFER FROM THE MEPC BECAUSE THE UN WOULD BE "SORT OF A MEDIATOR" AND THAT IT WOULD BE "EASIER" FOR THE PRINCIPALS TO MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THE "OTHER PARTIES" THERE. ACCORDING TO PYRLIN, THE PLO WOULD TAKE PART IN SUCH A MEETING. THIS POINT, HE SAID, IS BASIC TO WALDHEIM'S THINKING ON THIS MATTER.

7. LIBYA. PYRLIN DENIED THAT MOSCOW INTENDED TO SUBSTITUTE LIBYAN FACILITIES FOR THOSE WHICH IT HAD LOST IN ALEXANDRIA. SUCH A MOVE WOULD BE "VERY COMPLICATED," HE SAID. PYRLIN THEN RECOUNTED THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS WHICH QADDHAFI HAS WITH HIS NEIGHBORS. IN ADDITION TO VERY STRAINED RELATIONS WITH EGYPT, LIBYA'S RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA WERE, "VERY TENSE," ALTHOUGH ECONOMICALLY LIBYA AND TUNISIA MAINTAINED VERY ACTIVE TIES, ACCORDING TO PYRLIN.

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IM JORDAN. PYRLIN CONFIRMED THAT KING HUSSEIN WOULD VISIT THE USSR DURING THE SECOND HALF OF JUNE, AND WOULD BE IN MOSCOW AS WELL AS OTHER CITIES FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS. HE ADDED THAT THE QUEEN WOULD COME ALSO.

9. USSR-ISRAEL. PYRLIN SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN FORWARD MOVEMENT IN ESTABLISHING SOVIET RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, AND CLAIMED THAT MOSCOW DOES NOT HAVE EVEN INFORMAL CONTACTS WITH THE ISRAELIS. HE ADMITTED THAT "SOONER OR LATER" RELATIONS WILL PROBABLY BE ESTABLISHED, BUT THE ABSENCE OF ANY PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT AND THE "ANTI-SOVIET CAMPAIGN" CARRIED OUT BY THE GOI, E.G., THE RECENT BRUSSELS CONFERENCE, MAKES THIS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE MOMENT.

10. SUDAN. PYRLIN SAID THAT GENERAL KULIKOV'S VISIT TO KHARTOUM WAS ESSENTIALLY FOR "PROTOCOL" REASONS, AND IT DID NOT REPRESENT AN EFFORT TO EXPAND THE SOVIET MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO THE SUDAN. PYRLIN ADDED THAT, IN ANY CASE, THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WAS "A SMALL PART" OF OVERALL MOSCOW-KHARTOUM RELATIONS. ACCORDING TO PYRLIN, KULIKOV WILL NOT GO ON TO ANY OTHER AFRICAN STATES, BUT WILL RETURN TO MOSCOW APRIL 9 OR 10.

11. COMMENT. PYRLIN'S REMARKS RE THE OBSERVER STATEMENT

ON LEBANON TEND TO SUPPORT OUR INITIAL IMPRESSION (REFTEL) THAT SOVIET CONCERN FOR US DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY PROMPTED AN AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT AT THIS TIME, AND THAT THE MESSAGE'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESSEE WAS THE U.S. MOREOVER, HIS COMMENTS CONCERNING ACTIONS DESIGNED TO BRING THE PALESTINIANS TOGETHER TRACK WITH THE IMPRESSION CONVEYED BY OBSERVER THAT THE SOVIETS ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THIS PARTICULAR BASTION OF THEIR MIDDLE EAST POLICY. PYRLIN'S ASSERTION THAT DEBT RESCHEDULING AND TRADE TALKS WILL BE HELD WITH THE EGYPTIANS IN THE NEAR FUTURE TRACK WITH OTHER REPORTS WHICH INDICATE THAT MOSCOW IS NOT AT PRESENT ACTIVELY CONSIDERING TAKING RETALIATORY ACTION IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD. PYRLIN ALSO CONVEYED THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT AS FAR AS THE SOVIETS ARE CONCERNED, THE MEPC WAS INDEED A "FROZEN" CONFIDENTIAL

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ISSUE AT THIS MOMENT. HIS INTEREST IN THE ALLEGED WALDHEIM PROPOSAL FOR SETTLEMENT TALKS UNDER UN SPONSORSHIP STRUCK US AS MORE GRASPING AT STRAWS THAN AS SERIOUS HOPE THAT THE MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT PROCESS COULD BE MOVED FORWARD IN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS.
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